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FOCUS

The monthly magazine of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies®

The Roots of Pan-Africanism

First in a Series of Historical Articles on the Relationship Between Black Americans and Africa

Unfinished Business of Carter G. Woodson

The Work of the Nation's Pioneering Scholar of African-American History Continues in Struggles Over School Curricula

When to End Busing

A Recent U.S. Supreme Court Decision on School Desegregation Raises as Many Questions as It Answers

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER®

Perspective

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The Mainstreaming of Black Politics

In 1973, Tom Bradley was elected mayor of Los Angeles, a city whose black voters represent less than 20 percent of the population. Since his first election, Mayor Bradley has become the contemporary role model for a new breed of black elected official whose base is in the black community but who can also win the support of whites, Latinos, Asian Americans, Jews, and other segments of our diverse society.

Just as a quarter century ago, when the cutting edge of the civil rights movement shifted from protest to politics, we are now witnessing an equally momentous change—the mainstreaming of black politics in America. After decades of painstaking organizing, blacks are now building coalitions across racial lines, winning public offices in predominantly white jurisdictions, and capturing leadership positions that can influence the full spectrum of public policies from civil rights and human services to economics, foreign policy, and national security.

As this dramatic evolutionary process unfolds, there are three generalizations that can be drawn about the emerging black politics. First, it is a politics of inclusion, a politics that reaches across the barriers of race, ethnicity, and color that has been characterized by the campaigns of Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder and Mayors David Dinkins of New York, Norman Rice of Seattle, and John Daniels of New Haven.

The second generalization about the new black politics is that it differs in tone and temper from the politics of the sixties. Today, there is room for honest disagreement and principled compromise on policy issues. And priorities are now pursued not only with appeals to conscience but also with appeals to enlightened self-interest. Third, the emerging black politics is increasingly the politics of a new generation. When the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965, for example, Congressmen Mike Espy of Mississippi and Alan Wheat of Missouri were adolescents.

While the emerging black politics remains oriented to the historic conflicts between blacks and whites, it is also responsive to the changing relationships among the varied hues of our increasingly multi-ethnic society. Understandably, this new generation of leadership will have a different style, a different vocabulary, and even different priorities from the generations that preceded it.

Today, black politicians are challenged to show the same cultural sensitivity to other minorities that we ask them and white politicians to show to us. Reaching out to other minorities means that blacks must make an effort to speak their language—in policy terms to be sure, but sometimes even literally, especially in states like California, Florida, and Texas. Thus, new political styles and pragmatic coalitions are needed to achieve mutual goals in the era of multiracial and multicultural politics.

There is no reason to fear, however, that these trends will amount to the death of black politics. As Governor Wilder said in his criticism of President Bush's veto of the Civil Rights Act, "crossover politics" most certainly need not mean abandoning the black community. Furthermore, the inalienable right to protest need never be sacrificed to the expediencies of politics. We haven't forfeited the right to picket the city halls of New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, or Detroit. Yes, we can still fight city hall—even when one of our own is sitting in the mayor's chair!

In short, what we see on the horizon is not the death of black politics but its growth and maturation. The question for the future is not only whether black political leaders will seek to appeal to the larger society, but also how the larger society will respond. ■



PRESIDENT

FOCUS

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The Roots of Pan-Africanism

First in a Series of Historical Articles on the Relationship Between Black Americans and Africa

by Walter C. Carrington

"What is Africa to me...three centuries removed from the scenes his fathers loved?" the poet Countee Cullen asked in his most popular work, "Heritage". Cullen, a leading light of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, offered a romantic response conjuring up an Eden lost. The search for a more pragmatic answer has continued from the arrival of the first slaves upon these shores in 1619.

Much has been written about the long struggle of American blacks to achieve first class citizenship in the United States. Less has been written and understood about the parallel endeavors to rationalize the African heritage with the American inheritance. W.E.B. DuBois set forth the dilemma in 1903: "One ever feels his two-ness–an American and a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body...."

At times of deepest despair over their future in America, many blacks followed those who argued, as did Martin Delany in the mid 19th century, that African-Americans were a "broken nation" who could only be made whole again by separating from their white oppressors. Unwelcome in white churches, blacks formed their own denominations as early as 1793 and christened them African. Early on, these new black churches saw their relationship with Africa primarily in terms of helping to Christianize their "heathen" brethren in Africa; by the late 19th century, however, black churches began to champion the grievances Africans held against their colonial exploitation.

American blacks took the lead in protesting Belgian atrocities in the Congo and French and German designs on Liberia. Along with blacks in other parts of the African diaspora, they formed the Pan-African Movement and saved the German colonies from being swallowed up by the victorious Allied Powers at the end of World War I. America's black colleges educated generations of African leaders, from the founders of the African National Congress to the first heads of state of Ghana, Malawi and Nigeria.

In contemporary times blacks moved the American government away from complicity with the apartheid regime in South Africa and towards greater relief to the drought stricken Sahel and Horn regions of the continent. The impetus towards an African identification, which had been elite driven in the 19th century, had become, by the end of the 20th, more and more sparked by the rank and file.

Walter C. Carrington, a consultant on international affairs at the Joint Center, is a former United States ambassador to Senegal.

"Back-To-Africa" and Black Nationalism

In the pre-Civil War period many black and white abolitionists questioned whether the black man, bond or free, had a future in the United States. White foes of slavery organized the American Colonization Society (ACS) in 1816 and, through the armed intervention of naval officers, forced West African coastal chiefs to sell them land on which to repatriate freed blacks to a new homeland, to be called Liberia. The colonization scheme was highly controversial from its inception. The ACS was regarded, even by many blacks who favored a return to Africa, as a subterfuge by paternalistic whites to evade, rather than solve, the race question in America.

Those free blacks most pessimistic about their future in America sought a solution in emigration back to Africa. Those who felt that blacks had as much a claim upon this country as whites saw emigration as a shunning of their major responsibility—the freeing of their brothers in bondage. Thus was joined the intellectual argument that has raged ever since: was identification with Africa a diversion from the central issue of the black man's role in America or a complement to it?

Paul Cuffe was among the first blacks to organize a return to Africa. In 1815, seven years before the American Colonization Society's settlement of Liberia, he outfitted one of his ships from his own funds, which he had accumulated as a shipbuilder, and underwrote the costs of transporting nine families to Sierra Leone. So popular was Cuffe's first venture that he had a waiting list of over 2,000 for his second; but Cuffe died before he could transport another group. It would be nearly 40 years before strong black leadership again emerged to promote a back-to-Africa movement. In the meantime, free blacks focused on bettering their condition in the United States through the Negro Convention Movement, which first met in 1830 and for the next two decades was the dominant forum through which free blacks pressed their demands for civil rights. The Movement held conventions throughout the North and passed resolutions for black advancement, but it gave no support to those who argued that progress could better be realized outside America. However, as pessimism deepened concerning whether slavery would ever be abolished or former slaves become part of the American polity, advocates of emigration began to gain support.

The most prominent spokesman for emigration was an 1852 Harvard college medical graduate who claimed de-

(Continued on page 4)

Africa

(Continued from page 3)

scent from the Mandinka royalty of West Africa--Dr. Martin R. Delany. It is to him that the origins of the black nationalist strain in American intellectual thought can be traced. In an age when black was considered anything but beautiful, Delany preached race pride. Frederick Douglass said of him: "I have always thanked God for making me a man, but Martin Delany always thanked God for making him a black man."

Central to Delany's thought was the belief that blacks formed a nation within a nation, "a broken nation," as did the Poles in Russia, the Hungarians in Austria, and the Welsh, Irish, and Scots in Britain. "The claims of no people are respected by any nation, until they are presented in a national capacity," he argued.

Delany disparaged the Liberian experiment of the American Colonization Society, dismissing it as "not independent–but a poor mockery–a burlesque on government." He wished instead to see a great state built in Africa, "a nation, to whom all the world must pay commercial tribute." Towards that end he led an exploring party to Nigeria in 1859, sailing aboard a ship owned by three African merchants. His one-year stay resulted in the signing of treaties in Nigeria with the king of the Egbas, giving American blacks the right to settle in their territory. The agreements were never followed up because the Civil War broke out just as Delany returned to the United States. He put aside his emigration schemes and joined the Union Army as a brevet major; he was first assigned to recruit blacks and later was commissioned into the Army Medical Corps. After the war Delaney worked in Reconstruction agencies. In 1874, he tried electoral politics, losing as a Republican candidate for governor of South Carolina.

The Missionary Imperative

The abolition of slavery and the Fourteenth Amendment's grant of citizenship gave hope that there might be a future for blacks in this country after all and put to rest for half a century any major efforts to return to Africa. The words of the pre-eminent black abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass, spoken before Emancipation, became the credo of the newly freed slaves: "Our minds are made up to live here if we can, or die here if we must . . . here we are and here we shall remain."

While colonization and emigration strategies were generated by concern over the Negro's future in America, a different 19th century movement concentrated on improving the spiritual and temporal condition of Africans. A deeply religious black American population came to believe that they were part of a "providential design," brought here by God–so Bishop Henry McNeal Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church preached–to acquire education and civilization which they would then take back to Africa.

The AME Church was established in 1793 as blacks seceded from the racism of the white dominated Methodist Church. The AME Church was to become, in the latter part of the 19th century, the largest black American religious body in Africa. It has grown to a quarter of a million members today.

Beginning in 1814, black missionaries were eagerly recruited by white churches to be sent to bring their "heathen" African brothers to Christ. But these black missionaries, who identified with and encouraged African nationalism, succeeded all too well: they resisted the expanding European colonial presence. In 1897, after white churches had backed off from sending any more of them, black church affiliates formed their own missionary societies.

In 1897 the AME Church was successful in persuading its fellow black Methodists in South Africa to follow its own example and break away from the white dominated Wesleyan Church of England and affiliate with the AME. This moment marked the beginning of the movement for independent black churches on the continent. The AMEs were blamed for the 1906 revolt in Durban, South Africa, during which the Africans shouted the slogan which Bishop Turner had made his anthem when in South Africa: "Africa for the Africans." They and other black Americans were excoriated in the South African press for arranging for "young natives" to go to the United States for a college education. South Africa's fears of what such an education might lead to were realized when two Africans, Pixley Seme and John Dube, returned and established the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912.

Seme, the ANC's chief founder, and Dube, its first president, were but two of thousands of Africans who were to come to the campuses of black colleges in the United States to receive a university education often denied to them at home. No greater contribution was made by African-Americans to their ancestral homeland in the century between American Emancipation in the 1860s and African Liberation in the 1960s than the education of young Africans in this country and the building and support of educational facilities in Africa by black church groups.

The list of future leaders trained at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) is impressive. Lincoln University in Pennsylvania graduated the two most important African nationalists of their time–Kwame Nkrumah, whose Ghana became, in 1957, the first sub-Saharan state to achieve independence from colonial rule, and Nnamdi Azikiwe, who became Nigeria's first president in 1960. Hastings Banda, who received medical training at Meharry Medical College, led the break-up of Cecil Rhodes' pride and joy, the Central African Federation. Banda took Nyasaland to independence as Malawi, laying the ground work for the later transformation of the other two members of the federation, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, into Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Ambivalence Among the Black Leadership

African nationalists often saw the resemblance between the status of blacks under white supremacy in America and

(Continued on back page)

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER®

Inside This Issue:

- **Congressional initiatives of the 102nd Congress**
- **Across the Nation: Al Scott is named Georgia Commissioner of Labor; New Hampshire addresses King holiday; Daniel Blue becomes house speaker in North Carolina; and Earnestine Hunt is appointed judge in Tennessee.**

Legislative Agenda: 102nd Congress

The 102nd Congress convened last month in the throes of a recession and on the verge of war. While the President's attention is dominated by events in the Persian Gulf, this Congress must address a challenging domestic agenda that includes reforming campaign ethics and finance, expanding access to health care while curbing its cost, refurbishing the nation's crumbling infrastructure, salvaging the savings and loan industry, and keeping the banking industry solvent. Other items include education, crime, environment, and labor issues. Several current legislative initiatives that concern matters of particular importance to black Americans are discussed below.

Civil Rights Act

House Judiciary Chairman JACK BROOKS (D-Tex.) has reintroduced the Civil Rights Act of 1990, which passed both houses last year but was vetoed by President Bush. Senator **EDWARD KENNEDY** (D-Mass.), one of the original sponsors of last year's bill, has indicated that he will introduce the bill in the Senate. **Like its predecessor, the new bill, H.R. 1, would reverse or modify five 1989 Supreme Court decisions that weakened the ability of employment discrimination victims to secure redress through the courts. The legislation would also expand Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to allow the awarding of compensatory and punitive damages to victims of job discrimination that is based on sex, religion, or national origin. Title VII already includes that option for victims of job discrimination based on race. H.R. 1 also stresses that employers are not required or encouraged to adopt quotas.**

The 1990 bill was supported by labor, religious, civic, and civil rights groups, while its primary opponents were the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, some members of the business community, and an ad hoc group of business executives called the Fair Employment Coalition. The President vetoed the 1990 bill because, he contended, it would require the implementation of quotas. Although the language of the bill specified that it was not a quota bill, opponents argued that employers would resort to quotas in an effort to avoid the appearance of discrimination. **Brooks and the new legislation's other chief sponsors on the House Judiciary Committee, DON EDWARDS (D-Cal.) and HAMILTON FISH (R-N.Y.), promise swift action on the bill, which is pending in the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights.**

Higher Education Act

The Higher Education Act (HEA), established in 1965 to assist low and moderate income students in attaining postsecondary education, is now up for its five-year reauthorization. A bill to reauthorize HEA has not yet been introduced in either chamber, and committee hearings aren't expected before May. However, education associations and higher education administrators are gearing up for the process, which may bring changes in the eligibility requirements, award formulas, and overall design of the federal loan and grant program, which this past year provided about $19 billion in financial aid for six million college students.

Titles III and IV of the act authorize the bulk of federal student aid. Title III provides funding for historically black colleges and universities. Title IV authorizes the major federal programs that support postsecondary educa-

tion, including the four primary types of financial aid available through the U.S. Department of Education grants (Pell and Supplemental Opportunity Grants), loans (Perkins and guaranteed student loans or GSLs), work-study, and fellowships.

Once the momentum picks up on reauthorization, legislators will need to address the current imbalance between loan and grant assistance, the increasing rate of student loan default, and access to postsecondary education for minorities and the poor. In the past decade, loans replaced grants as the major source of student funding, creating a financial hardship for some students by forcing them to incur considerable debt. Congress will probably try to fashion ways to balance the grant-loan assistance packages, possibly awarding more grants during the first two years of postsecondary enrollment to ease the debt load and encourage more students to enter college.

Related to the loan dependency problem is the problem of rising loan defaults. The rise in defaults prompted Congress last year to bar Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS) for those enrolled at schools with a default rate of 30 percent or higher. Loans from these schools were identified as the major source of all defaulted loans. Should more measures be taken against those schools, minorities would be heavily affected because so many are enrolled at the two kinds of schools with high default rates: historically black colleges and universities and proprietary trade schools. Both President Bush and the chair of the House Education and Labor Committee, **WILLIAM FORD** (D-Mich.), support federal aid for higher education, but both have said they believe the time is ripe for redesigning the federal aid programs. In the budget proposal he submitted to Congress earlier this month, the President requested $11.97 billion for higher education and proposed changes in the collection and federal liability for student loans, and in reshaping the Pell and GSL programs to fund more and larger grants, instead of loans, to students.

Voter Registration Act

The 101st Congress failed to pass legislation that would have greatly expanded all Americans' access to the ballot by simplifying voter registration. But this Congress has reignited the effort. U.S. Senators WENDELL H. FORD (D-Ky.) and MARK HATFIELD (R-Ore.) have introduced the National Voter Registration Act of 1991, S. 250, which would expand opportunities for eligible citizens to register to vote and implement more effective procedures for maintaining updated registration lists. A similar measure was approved by the House last year, H.R. 2190, but the Senate version of the bill, S. 894, failed to gain floor consideration before adjournment. The new bill, commonly referred to as the motor voter bill, would increase access to voter registration by allowing registration by mail, in public offices and government agencies, and when applying for or renewing a driver's license. While these procedures are currently available in several states, the legislation would make the access uniform throughout the country. The House leadership also plans to reintroduce last year's bill during this Congress.

Last year's House bill and this year's Senate bill both include the motor voter and agency-based registration provisions. However, last year's House bill also would have appropriated funds for the Federal Elections Commission to help states and localities finance the act. Proponents of the bill contend that the measure is necessary to insure wider access and increase voter participation. Opponents argue that it would expand the bureaucracy and saddle state governments with exorbitant administrative costs. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that last year's House bill would cost $20 to $25 million in staffing and computerization in its first five years after.

Racial Justice Act

Michigan Democrat JOHN CONYERS, who is chair of the House Government Operations Committee and a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, plans to again introduce the Racial Justice Act, a measure for limiting the use of the death penalty in a racially disproportionate pattern. The measure was first introduced in 1988 during the 100th Congress in response to a 1987 Supreme Court decision—*McClesky v. Kemp*—which held that statistical evidence of racial disparity is not sufficient to prove violations of the Eighth Amendment (cruel and unusual punishment) and Fourteenth Amendment (equal protection under the law). Conyers says the bill's purpose is to uphold constitutional guarantees. It would allow capital defendants to submit statistical evidence that the death sentence has been imposed with disproportionate frequency against convicts of one race or as punishment for crimes against victims of one race. According to the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, 40 percent of the defendants who have been put to death since 1976 have been black and nearly half of the 2,393 inmates waiting on death row are people of color.

The bill specifically prohibits state governments from imposing death sentences in a racially disproportionate pattern. It requires all states which seek to impose the death penalty to designate an agency to maintain data on capital cases, thus making it easier for capital defendants to obtain necessary data to challenge their sentences. It also requires the appointment of legal counsel as well as investigative and expert services to aid indigent defendants in seeking relief. During the 100th and the 101st Congresses, the bill failed to get beyond committee consideration. A similar provision was deleted from the omnibus crime bill (S.3266) that was passed by Congress last October.

Black Reparations

A bill to study the effects of slavery and continuing discrimination and to examine the feasibility of reparations to black Americans will be reintroduced during this Congress. The bill would establish a commission to carry out the study and make recommendations to Congress regarding what remedies, if any, are in order.

The bill's author, John Conyers, says the bill is similar to one enacted by Congress in 1980 to establish a commission and make recommendations regarding the impact internment had on Japanese-Americans during World War II. That effort led to the passage of legislation in 1988 that provided reparations of $1.25 billion for the surviving Japanese-Americans who had suffered internment. The Conyers bill would establish a seven-member commission to be appointed by the President. In the last Congress, the bill did not pass the subcommittee's mark-up.

African American Research Center

Representative MIKE PARKER, a white Democratic congressman from Mississippi, plans to reintroduce a bill establishing a center of African-American literature at Jackson State University in honor of acclaimed writer Dr. MARGARET WALKER ALEXANDER. The purpose of the National Margaret Walker Alexander Research Center of African-American Literature would be to preserve 20th century black American cultural materials and archival resources. Parker believes the center is needed "to provide a repository for resource material and primary sources on African-American culture and to serve as a tribute to Dr. Margaret Walker Alexander."

She presently is a professor emeritus of English at Jackson State in Jackson, Mississippi, and is known for her contributions to American literature as a novelist and a poet. Her most noted works are the poem "For My People" and the novel *Jubilee*. Republican Mississippi Senator **THAD COCHRAN** plans to introduce a similar version of the bill in the Senate. The bill was introduced last year but failed to move beyond the subcommittee level. If approved, it would authorize $8 million for the establishment of the center.

African-American Museum Bill

Georgia Democratic Congressman JOHN LEWIS will reintroduce legislation to establish a National African-American Heritage Museum dedicated to collecting, cataloging, conserving, and displaying historical materials related to the history of black Americans. Lewis says the museum would hold interpretative and educational programs dedicated to the heritage and culture of America's black citizens. The legislation would also establish a National Trust for Black Museums, which would be responsible for collecting black artifacts, training black museum professionals, and developing programs to further the understanding of black American history and culture. Lewis envisions a museum affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and, ideally, located on the Mall in front of the Capitol building with the other Smithsonian museums or on some other designated federal property in Washington. The legislation authorizes $5 million to create an administrative structure for fundraising.

Join Us at Our Annual Dinner

We are pleased to invite you to our 14th annual dinner on Tuesday, April 9, 1991. The dinner, saluting black women in politics, will be held at the Washington Hilton Hotel here in the nation's capital. Our keynote speaker will be the mayor of the District of Columbia, Sharon Pratt Dixon. Mr. Robert E. Allen, chairman and CEO of the American Telephone & Telegraph Company, is this year's national dinner chairman.

The dinner, which is the Joint Center's only fundraising event, provides significant support for our research and outreach programs. This year's prices for 10-seat tables are: Chairman's Circle, $10,000; Sponsors', $5,000; Patrons', $3,000. Individual tickets are also available for $300 each. For reservations or further information please call Afreda Edwards at (202) 626-3555.

ACROSS THE NATION

GEORGIA: Former state senator AL SCOTT is now serving in the state capitol in Atlanta as commissioner of labor. The Savannah Democrat was appointed to the position by Georgia's new governor ZELL MILLER, also a Democrat. His appointment makes him the first black non-judicial officer in a Georgia statewide post since Reconstruction.

As commissioner of labor, Scott heads a statewide network of 50 offices with a staff of 1,800 and an annual budget of more than $150 million. The state employment offices administer the state's unemployment insurance program, the federal Job Training Partnership Act, and a variety of employment programs.

Scott was first elected to Georgia's house of representatives in 1975 and served through 1982 when he was elected to the state senate, becoming the first black state senator outside of metropolitan Atlanta since Reconstruction. While Scott was in the senate, then Lieutenant Governor Miller named him chairman of the Children and Youth Committee. He also chaired the Public Utilities Committee.

As labor commissioner, Scott replaces **JOE TANNER**, whom Miller has now appointed to take over the state's Department of Natural Resources. In accordance with the state constitution, Scott will have to run in the 1992 general election to retain the commissioner's post for the remaining two years of the four year-term. He has said that he plans to run.

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Governor JUDD GREGG declared last January 20 "Martin Luther King Jr. and Civil Rights Celebration Day," and he has announced that he will push for a bill in the state legislature to permanently establish the third Sunday in January for an official celebration in lieu of a paid holiday.

Despite Gregg's executive order, New Hampshire remains, with Arizona, one of only two states that do not observe the third Monday in January, the day of the federal observance, as a state paid holiday in honor of Dr. King. North Dakota recognizes the federal holiday as a state holiday, but without pay. Montana's state legislature approved legislation on February 8 establishing a paid state observance of the federal holiday.

ARNIE ALPERT of New Hampshire's King Holiday Committee, a private organization of citizens pushing for state adoption of the federal holiday, says the governor's support of a celebration day instead of a holiday does not satisfy holiday supporters in the state, who will continue to seek New Hampshire's observance of the federal holiday.

Two related proposals being discussed in New Hampshire include a "Martin Luther King Human Rights Day" bill and a "Civil Rights Day" bill. The first bill, which state senator WAYNE KING plans to introduce this session, would create a paid holiday on the same day as the federal holiday. Supporters of this bill include the state King Holiday Committee and black state representative JUANITA BELL.

Republican state representative **JACQUELYN DOMAINGUE** is expected to offer the second bill, which would establish a "Civil Rights Day" as the fourth Monday in April, replacing a holiday unique to the state dating back to the colonial period called "Fast Day." Domaingue has stated that she supports a "Civil Rights Day" because it would embrace more people than would a holiday honoring one man (King).

NORTH CAROLINA: The new speaker of the state house of representatives is black Democrat DANIEL BLUE, a lawyer from Raleigh. Blue was elected to the two-year term by the house last month with support from both parties.

A graduate of Duke University Law School, Blue has served in the house for 10 years. He has been a member of the Rules and Appropriations committees and a vice chair of the Judiciary Committee. He has chaired the state legislature's Black Caucus, and in 1988 headed North Carolina's Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign, and later co-chaired the Dukakis-Bentsen campaign.

Blue's election makes him the fourth black man in the United States to be speaker of a state house. The others are S. HOWARD WOODSON, JR., who was speaker of the New Jersey Assembly from 1974 to 1976; K. LEROY IRVIS, who presided as speaker of the Pennsylvania house from 1977 to 1978 and again from 1982 until his retirement in 1988; and WILLIE L. BROWN, JR., the current speaker of the California Assembly, first elected in 1980.

TENNESSEE: In December, EARNESTINE HUNT was sworn in as the first black female city judge in Memphis. She was elected with 60 percent of the vote in a December 11 runoff against SARA KYLE. Kyle, a white former assistant public defender, has family ties to two of Tennessee's major Democratic political players: both her husband and aunt are state senators.

Hunt is a graduate of Clark University in Atlanta and Memphis State University Law School. Prior to the December election, she was engaged in private law practice in Memphis and worked as a trial lawyer for the Shelby County Public Defender's Office.

Hunt was sworn in by Memphis Judge **BERNICE BOUIE DONALD**, the first black woman elected to a judgeship in the state and the first black woman appointed to the federal bench in the Western District of Tennessee. Donald was elected to the General Sessions Criminal Court in 1982 and appointed to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in 1988.

Reminder!

Don't forget to return the *Focus* readers survey that appeared in the January issue of the magazine.

Unfinished Business of Carter G. Woodson

The Work of the Nation's Pioneering Scholar of African-American History Continues in Struggles Over School Curricula

by Mary Frances Berry

In 1934, the prominent British historian Arnold Toynbee asserted, "[O]f all the races of mankind, only the black race had made no productive contribution to civilization." That view was casually tossed about in the first half of this century by professional historians, practically all of them white males, who consistently discounted African-American people in their writings.

The first American scholar to overturn the "conventional wisdom" about blacks' role in history was Carter G. Woodson. Considered by many to be the father of African-American history, Woodson endeavored over his lifetime to ensure that a truthful picture of black people was included in the history curriculum as well as the popular literature of our society. He was a man who saw the strength and character evident in the history of the race and its traditions and was determined to perpetuate them. Woodson created institutions that have stimulated scholarship on African-American history and developed forums for generations of black and white scholars who have expanded his work. He answered those who criticized his race by using the tools of the historian—research, scholarship, and writings—as well as the force of his personality, his determination and willingness to sacrifice.

Yet, despite Woodson's monumental effort, black history continues to suffer from distortion and neglect. In some communities high school teachers cannot discuss the subject of black history without objection. That it is not included as a matter of course in the U.S. history curricula of schools and universities indicates that Woodson's work is not yet finished and that his cause is still embattled.

Woodson is most widely known as the man who, in 1926, created Negro History Week, now Black History Month, which is celebrated as Woodson intended during February, the birth month of Abraham Lincoln and reportedly also of Frederick Douglass. But Woodson's role in promoting greater awareness and understanding of black history goes far beyond this most visible contribution.

Born to former slaves in 1875, Carter G. Woodson educated himself during his teenage years while working in coal mines. Entering high school at 17, he finished in a year and a half and went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Berea College in Kentucky. Attending the University of Chicago in the summers and by correspondence, he received another bachelor's degree from that institution in 1905. In 1912, he became the second African-American after W.E.B. DuBois to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard.

An institution builder, in 1915 Woodson was the principal founder in Chicago of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (relocated to Washington, D.C., later that year), which became a vehicle for disseminating scholarly materials to schools and community organizations. In 1916 he also founded the *Journal of Negro History* and served as its editor for 34 years. Through the *Journal* and the Association's conventions, black intellectuals were provided forums at a time when racism kept the doors of most scholarly organizations closed to them. And in 1937, Woodson established the *Negro History Bulletin* to publish articles and reviews for the general public. He was a prolific writer himself, and his own publications brought the rich history of black America to wide audiences ranging from scholars to school children.

History from the Bottom Up

Much of Woodson's work involved modifying history curricula to pay greater attention to the contributions, deficiencies, problems, and experiences of groups that have been subordinated in American society. Over time, historians who have followed in his footsteps have continued the process of correcting history. Events such as the civil rights movement as well as economic and social change moved African-American history into the mainstream and accelerated interest in it. The civil rights movement, in particular, stimulated the guilt of whites and prompted interest by white and black historians in the writing of black history. Woodson studied history by examining census data, marriage registers, birth and death certificates, diaries, and oral histories of people who lived their lives without access to the levers of power. So when the study of history shifted focus from an emphasis on elites to a "bottom up" approach, historians had to do it Woodson's way.

Historian John Hope Franklin said of Woodson's work, "it was a remarkable attempt to rehabilitate a whole people, to explode racial myths, to establish a secure and respectable place for the Negro in the evolution of the American social order, to develop self-respect and self-es-

(Continued on page 6)

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Woodson

(Continued from page 5)

teem among those who had been subjected to the greatest indignities known in the Western world."

Woodson was a race man, a proud man who ruffled feathers. Yet he was not the intellectual separatist that his critics charged. White scholars served on the boards of the organizations he founded and he encouraged their participation at meetings and in the Journal. He would not have approved of the black nationalists' efforts in the 1960s to exclude white scholars from the study of black history. He would also have been angry to see that young African-American historians in the late 1960s and 1970s neglected the organizations he created as they gained admittance to mainstream associations.

Woodson would also be disappointed today at the low level of our public policy debates and the inability of most Americans—especially our young people—to place any substantive subject in a historical context. For example, students know about "I have a dream" (the theme of one of Dr. King's most memorable speeches) but not about non-violent protests (the core of King's philosophy). They know who Abe Lincoln was but not what caused the secession of Southern states or the Civil War. Only half know why there was a Bill of Rights. And merely 38 percent know the opening of the Declaration of Independence.

Self-Esteem and the Western Tradition

The scholarship of Woodson's books and the *Journal of Negro History* were praised by distinguished historians and other scholars. Yet he had many detractors. Thomas Jesse Jones of the Phelps-Stokes Foundation influenced other foundations to withdraw support from Woodson's projects after Woodson had criticized Jones' African Educational Commission, which tried to establish a system of education in Africa that was likely to perpetuate colonial rule. Jones insisted that Woodson had become "a propagandist with a distinct antipathy to movements for racial cooperation."

Today, the detractors of African-American history are still at large. The National Association of Scholars, a group of American academics, argues for the centrality of the "Western tradition" and attacks those who want to reform the history curriculum as politicizing it. Yet a cursory knowledge of world history tells us that the traditions of the West, in terms of historical time, are of recent origin. Any valid historical interpretation would tell us that there is no reason to infer that Western traditions will remain dominant. Moreover, a knowledge of the entire world today would tell us that these traditions are not universal.

Columbia University historian Diane Ravitch has taken issue with the notion that history can be used to teach self-esteem or racial and ethnic pride. Yet those have traditionally been the goals of history instruction. History, as taught in our schools, has been a celebration of the white, male, Protestant Founding Fathers rather than the great mix of people in the American drama. It has praised the West and the Frontier as opportunity and advancement, focusing only on the white men who made it rather than the poor who did not or the Indians who were robbed.

Efforts at changing historical inaccuracies about some white groups and acknowledging their contributions have been made in a number of textbooks, as in the following examples: The "group's loyalty and talent for politics in the Democratic medium made [the Irish] the first and most enduring of racial blocs in America. Their control of the local government of New York was long proverbial" (Morrison & Commager); "Pennsylvania Germans became celebrated throughout the country for their rich gardens and orchards and their stout barns and well-tended livestock, their sturdy self-sufficiency," and, "Their readiness to penetrate ever deeper across the Indian frontier formed [the Scotch-Irish] and their descendants into the characteristic American type" (Hofstadter, Miller & Aron).

People who are in subordinated groups want history simply to do for them what history has already done for white males. It is well that history tells the story of white inventors like Cyrus McCormick and his planting and mowing machine, Christopher Latham Sholes' typewriter and John Deere's steel plow. There is nothing wrong with telling children about the glories of these historical figures, so long as that is not all we tell them.

Why can't our history also tell us of Elijah McCoy, who patented 50 inventions for automatic lubrication of railroad cars and locomotives. The integrity of his products led to the term "real McCoy." Granville Woods created several inventions in the fields of electricity, steam boilers, and automatic brakes that were assigned to General Electric, Westinghouse Air Brakes, and American Bell Telephone. Jan Matzeliger invented the shoe-lasting machine—purchased by United Shoe Machinery Company—which reduced the cost of manufacturing shoes by 50 percent.

Woodson's Unfinished Work

Anyone who looks at recent history textbooks can tell that the revision of standards and relative weights for gauging what aspects of black history are important enough to include in texts is only gradually taking place. Information is being tacked on instead of incorporated to challenge existing interpretations.

Thus, while black history has matured since Woodson's time, much work remains to be done. Those who would follow in his path must engage sincerely in the historian's task not to distort but to tell the truth and to interpret fairly in as many ways as may present themselves. If that is done, we will enrich the study of history, and some self-esteem for the previously unesteemed will naturally result. Ultimately, what Woodson started and modern historians have continued has a higher, more universal purpose than correcting the historical record. In the words of Dr. John Hope Franklin, Woodson made a "valiant attempt to force America to keep faith with herself, to remind her that truth is more praiseworthy than power, and that justice and equality, long the stated policy of this nation, would apply to all citizens and even to the writing of history." ■

When to End Busing

A Recent U.S. Supreme Court Decision on School Desegregation Raises as Many Questions as It Answers

by Mark Lloyd

In *Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell,* the U.S. Supreme Court opened the pandora's box of school busing, peeked inside, stirred around a bit, and then passed the box back to the local district court. What escaped from that box is as yet uncertain. And, according to school desegregation experts, therein lies the danger.

The dispute was between black parents and the Oklahoma City Board of Education over a "neighborhood school plan." That plan, opponents argued,would lead to resegregated elementary schools and an inferior education for their children. The school system countered that 17 years under a desegregation decree was enough. In a 5-to-3 decision handed down on January 15, the Supreme Court stopped short of releasing the school system from court supervision but said the guideline used by the Court of Appeals to maintain court supervision was too strict.

The question squarely before the Supreme Court was: When can a school system be released from a federal court desegregation order? The answer was: When the school board has complied with the order in good faith and "the vestiges of past discrimination had been eliminated to the extent practicable." Precisely what those "vestiges" are, or what the "practicable" extent is, remains unclear.

There was no disagreement over the much heralded Supreme Court finding that federal oversight was "not intended to operate in perpetuity." The Court's majority and the dissenters agreed that a school desegregation decree should end when the purposes of the decree were met. The dissenting justices split from the majority on the purposes of desegregation and on how far a school system has to go to meet those purposes. Writing for the dissenters, Justice Thurgood Marshall argued that the Court needed to state that "a desegregation decree cannot be lifted so long as conditions likely to inflict . . . stigmatic injury . . . persist and there remain *feasible* methods of eliminating such conditions. Included in the concept of vestige is any condition that is likely to convey the message of inferiority implicit in a policy of segregation." Chief Justice Rehnquist wrote for the majority, "in considering whether the vestiges of de jure segregation had been eliminated as far as *practicable*, the federal district court should look not only at student assignments, but to every facet of school operations—faculty, staff, transportation, extra-curricular activities and facilities." Rehnquist's checklist did not mention the stigmas referred to by Marshall.

According to long-time civil rights attorney William Taylor, the important difference between the majority and the dissent is that "Justice Marshall wants to call attention to the underlying conditions that may lead to resegregating the school. However, Chief Justice Rehnquist ignores the underlying conditions and adopts a go-by-the-numbers approach." Even so, says Taylor, the majority "did not define the circumstances that would lead to dissolving the desegregation decree. I'm concerned where things are heading, but they haven't gotten there yet."

It is now up to the federal district court to determine whether Oklahoma City schools meet the Supreme Court's guidelines. In all likelihood, the judge will be Luther Bohanon, the man who has presided over the local case since the original suit was filed in 1961. Bohanon imposed the desegregation decree in 1972, and five years later he granted the school board's motion to limit court supervision, writing that he "did not foresee the termination of the [desegregation] plan."

In 1984, however, the school board altered the plan, returning students in grades K through four to neighborhood schools. As a result, 33 of 64 Oklahoma City elementary schools have resegregated along racial lines, becoming either mostly black (90 percent or greater) or mostly white (80 percent or greater). Students in grades five through 12 are still being bused. In 1989, Bohanon dissolved the desegregation decree, ruling that "residential segregation in Oklahoma City was the result of private decision-making and economics," and that it was "too attenuated to be a vestige of former school segregation." The court of appeals reversed that decision, calling it "clearly erroneous."

University of Chicago Professor Gary Orfield, author of several studies on public school desegregation, says the spectre of continuing legal battles over this issue makes the Supreme Court's decision a "great loss to the civil rights community." According to Orfield, the limited means parents and civil rights organizations have to pursue these legal battles are hardly a match against the legal resources of the hundreds of school districts opposed to desegregation.

"Reagan and Bush have had 10 years to pack the district and appellate benches with conservative, anti-integration judges. And now the Supreme Court has put the future of school integration in the hands of these local judges." Orfield concludes, "All of us who understand the importance of integrated schools will have to become much more active at the local levels." ■

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Africa

(Continued from page 5)

their own condition under colonialism. Delany's "broken nation" could be compared to their own occupied homelands. In this realization they were often far ahead of American black leaders.

The dilemma as to how central to the concerns of blacks Africa was or should be is one with which leaders of the race have wrestled since the time of Frederick Douglass, who worried that preoccupation with Africa "plants our guns too far from the [primary] battlements." In Douglass's time Africa loomed as an issue mainly in regard to colonization and emigration schemes. These he opposed strongly, not out of any rejection of his African roots but because of his hostility toward those who sought to solve the problem of the Negro in America by ridding the country of his presence.

In the 1890s, when poor Southern blacks attempted to escape the oppression of newly enacted Jim Crow laws by reviving the African emigration movement, it was almost universally opposed by the educated black middle-class. The latter argued that they had as much a claim on America as anyone else, that they were here to stay and to change the system so they could benefit from it.

But being American did not mean abandoning interest in Africa's welfare. When in 1884 the "scramble for Africa" began, with the European powers partitioning the continent, many blacks vocally opposed any participation in it by the U.S. government. They were in line with the predominant sentiments of their fellow countrymen who were against imperial ventures in Africa. Blacks favored the "opening up" of Africa but were opposed to white domination of the continent. They supported the prevailing idea that Africa had to be "civilized" but felt this should be done through the promotion of missionary work and the pursuit of business opportunities rather than through European colonization or black American emigration.

The most influential black leader of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a former slave, Booker T. Washington. As president of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he eschewed a curriculum based on the liberal arts in favor of one that promoted industrial training. Washington's accomodationist racial views and his emphasis on teaching vocational skills through what became known as the "Tuskegee Model" won him wide acceptance in the white community in the United States and overseas. Washington was to have a huge influence on African education as colonial administrators, wary of the militant gospel being preached by black missionaries, sought to apply his methods to the training of Africans under their charge.

Ironically, Washington's model was rejected in turn-of-the-century South Africa. White workers there feared competition from Africans with vocational training, so government officials and labor leaders joined forces to promote job reservation laws which limited skilled trades to whites.

While Washington's involvement with Africa focused on replicating the Tuskegee model, he did become engaged in one of the major issues of African policy of the day–the Congo Free State. The Congo was neither free nor a state but rather a territory which Leopold II, King of the Belgians, ruled as a personal fiefdom beyond the audit of the government upon whose throne he sat. As Black Americans were showing a growing concern about the human rights abuses being committed in the middle of Africa by the representatives of Leopold, Booker T. Washington became greatly influenced by a report on the abuses in the Congo written by George Washington Williams, a black historian. Williams had been sent there on a fact finding mission by the United States Congress in 1890. As a result, Washington accepted the vice presidency of the U.S. based Congo Reform Association. From that platform, he became the first black leader to rally American public opinion against the injustices of European colonial role in Africa. ■

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